

Carroll, Rhonda

From: Sue Smith <ssmith8100@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 21, 2016 8:47 AM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: In support of HB 5344

**Testimony Concerning HB5344
Judiciary Committee, Wednesday, February 24, 2016
Sue Smith
PAWS (Norwalk) Dog Adoption Counselor, Volunteer**

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5344, An Act Concerning Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly.

Animal cruelty is an act of violence and rarely occurs in isolation. Too often, our state's courts seem to overlook this fact. Abusers get away with a hand slap, or worse yet, are not even prosecuted at all. Desmond, pictured at right, was severely abused and tortured to death, but his abuser got away with "Accelerated Rehabilitation."

80% of the animal cruelty charges brought against individuals in Connecticut are dismissed. For these cases, there is no justice for the abused animal, and potentially violent criminals are permitted to walk free. Accumulating evidence demonstrates a strong link between violence to animals and violence to people. In recognition of that link in 2011 CT enacted a law requiring Cross Reporting of Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty. And this January, for the first time ever, the FBI began collecting data on animal abuse cases.

However CT's animal cruelty laws and reporting requirements will mean nothing unless serious violations are prosecuted. A November 2015 report by Connecticut's Office of Legislative Research shows that between 2005 and 2015, **only 3500 cases were brought under the animal cruelty statute and of those cases a full 80% never made it to Court (47% not prosecuted (nolled) and 33% were dismissed).**

To help remedy this injustice, this bill will establish an animal advocate to represent animals in court who are victims of cruelty. Its aim is to reduce the number of dismissed cases and help ensure that punishments fit the severity of the violence committed.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,
Sue Smith
Westport, CT

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